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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Housekeepers' Chat Thursday, October 25, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION -

Subject: "How to Make Perfect Pie Crust." Menu, recipes, etc., from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: Home Baking.

--ooOoo--

For at least two weeks, I've known that I had to prepare a talk on making pies, and tell you how to make a pie crust so flaky, so light, and so tender, that your guests will exclaim: "At last, a perfect pie crust! How did you do it?"

For two weeks, I've been planning this talk. One day I sat down by the kitchen table, near the window, with pencil in hand. At the end of an hour, not one word had I written. Have you ever been in Washington, in October? It is an enchanting city, at any time of the year, but in October-- it is almost too beautiful. How can I keep my attention on pie crusts, when the sky is so blue, and the trees in Rock Creek Park are so radiant? Sometimes, when I walk down New Hampshire Avenue, with its canopy of leaves in brown, and red, and gold, I almost imagine I'm in a dream city -- it is so peaceful,, and yet so gorgeous.

But "life is real, and life is earnest," and I hear some impatient housewife murmuring to herself: "I wish Aunt Sammy would forget about the weather, and tell me how to make a perfect pie crust."

I'll try to pull myself together. If you will get your Radio Records, and your pencils, I'll give you a recipe for a plain pie crust, in a minute, and then tell you how to make a perfect pie. Even though I have no carefully-planned lecture, I can tell you lots about pies.

If you are as well acquainted with the Radio Cookbook as I am, you know that it contains recipes for Apple Pie, Butterscotch Cream Pie, Chocolate Pie, Cream Pie, Custard Pie, Green Tomato Pie, Lemon Pie -- that's all I can remember, but I think there are four or five others included.

Do you know why most inexperienced cooks have trouble, when making pie crust? Because they do not get the right proportions of fat, flour, and water, or else they work the dough too long and strenuously, and make their pie crust tough. Any well-flavored fat can be used, but the flakiest crust can be made with lard, or any one of the many good cooking fats or oils now on the market.

Perhaps you would like to have a recipe, for a plain pie crust, enough for a two-crust pie, or for two open-face pies. There are four ingredients, in a plain pie crust. Write them down, if you like:

About 2-1/2 tablespoons water, or just enough to make a stiff dough
1-1/2 cups sifted, soft-wheat flour
5 to 6 tablespoons fat, and
1/2 teaspoon salt.

Better check them, to be sure you have the correct amounts: (Repeat ingredients).

First, sift the flour and the salt together. Then, combine the fat and the flour. Some cooks cut the fat into the flour with two knives, or a pastry fork, or a biscuit cutter, so that the ingredients will not be warmed, by too much handling. However, the best cook I know employs the old-fashioned method of mixing the fat and flour with the tips of her fingers, working very quickly.

When the fat and flour are combined, sprinkle the water over the surface, and work it in with a light motion until evenly mixed. Shape the dough into a ball, either in a bowl, or on a lightly floured board. Divide the dough so that there will be a little over half, for the lower crust. Roll the pastry lightly into a sheet, test the size by inverting the pie tin over it, and allow an additional inch all around beyond the rim. Line the pan with the dough, and see that there are no air pockets between the pan and the dough. Put in the pie filling, and roll out the upper crust. Cut slits to allow the steam to escape. Moisten the rim of the undercrust with water, place the top crust in position, and press the two edges together with the thumb or the tines of a fork. Trim off the edges of dough, holding the knife underneath the pie tin at an angle so that the dough will not be cut too close to the edge of the pan. If there is a fruit filling, press the edges together again to prevent the juice from leaking out while the pie is baking.

For squash or pumpkin or other open-face pies with only one crust, it is best to bake the crust a delicate brown before the filling is put in. This gives a crisp undercrust. Line the pan as already described, and prick the pastry well over the bottom and sides of the pan before baking. For the lower crust, the oven should be about 450 degrees Fahrenheit, However, a pie with a filling that needs to be cooked, cannot be left long in an oven as hot as this, because the crust bakes too fast for the filling. To cook a two-crust pie with a raw fruit filling, the temperature should be about 450 degrees to start, and then lowered rapidly, after 8 or 10 minutes, so that the filling may cook through, without overcooking the crust.

There--- don't you think I did pretty well by the pies, considering my holiday mood? We'd better write the menu now, before I begin dreaming again, about blue skies and autumn leaves.

The menu includes Scalloped Salmon; Fried Okra; Buttered Peas; Pickle, or Sour Relish of some kind; and a Squash Pie.

I'm sure you've all seen the recent articles, in magazines and newspapers, advising us to "eat more sea food," because of the importance of iodine in the diet. Iodine helps to prevent goiter.

Canned salmon is available everywhere, all the year around. To make Scalloped Salmon, all you need is a can of salmon, white sauce, and buttered crumbs. Do you know how to make a white sauce for scalloped dishes? Use one cup of Milk, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 tablespoons fat, about a fourth teaspoon salt, and a speck of pepper. (Repeat). Place a layer of the salmone in the bottom of a greased baking dish. Pour some of the sauce over the salmon. Add another layer of salmon, then more sauce. Cover the top with buttered bread crumbs. Baken until the sauce bubbles, and the crumbs are brown. So much for the scalloped salmon.

Want a recipe for the Squash Pie? If you have a Radio Cookbook, you needn't listen to this. Nine ingredients, for Squash Pie, or Pumpkin Pie. If you don't have a squash, use a pumpkin. Nine ingredients, as follows:

1-1/2 cups pumpkin, or squash, cooked until thick.
1 cup milk
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon alspice
1/4 teaspoon mace
2 eggs, and
1 tablespoon butter

Check the nine ingredients while I repeat them: (Repeat)

Put all the ingredients, except the eggs and the butter, in the double boiler. Bring to the scalding point. Beat the eggs well; add them to the hot mixture. Stir until it starts to thicken. Add the butter. Line a pie pan with pastry and bake until light brown. Pour the hot filling into the baked crust. Bake the pie in a moderately hot oven until the filling sets.

To repeat the Menu: Scalloped Salmon; Fried Okra; Buttered Peas; Pickle, or Sour Relish of some kind; and a Squash Pie.

That's all, till tomorrow. Another menu tomorrow, and a special discussion of what to do with children who refuse to eat what's good for them.

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